

U.S. Department of Justice

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NEWS RELEASE

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced the sentencing today of Russell Lee Ebersole, 43, of Hagerstown, Maryland, the owner of a Stephenson, Virginia, bomb detection dog business, known as "Detector Dogs Against Drugs and Explosives" ("DDADE"), by the Honorable Leonie M. Brinkema, United States District Judge, Alexandria, in connection with a wire fraud scheme in which Ebersole provided ill-trained bomb detection dogs and handlers to government agencies in the wake of the September 11th attacks. Judge Brinkema sentenced Ebersole to 78 months imprisonment, and restitution in the amount of \$708,000. Ebersole had been convicted by a jury in June 2003 on 25 counts of wire fraud and two counts of submitting false claims to the United States.

Shortly after September 11, 2001, and continuing into May 2002, Ebersole marketed the services of his bomb detection dogs and handlers to several U.S. government agencies, including the Department of State and the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, both located in Washington, D.C., the Federal Emergency Management Agency Disaster Field Office in New York City, New York, and the IRS Service Center in Fresno, California. He offered to have his bomb detection teams patrol the perimeters of buildings used by those agencies, so as to protect thousands of employees working there. In the proposals he submitted in order to get business from those agencies, Ebersole made a series of false statements about DDADE, its training procedures, and the qualifications of its dogs and handlers. In an effort to keep the business, he submitted false certifications of performance proficiency regarding the DDADE explosives ordnance detection dogs and handlers to the State Department, the Federal Reserve and the IRS. DDADE dogs failed explosives detection tests administered on five different occasions, including one occasion on which the dogs and handlers failed to detect 50 pounds of TNT, 50 pounds of trenchrite 5 dynamite, and 15 pounds of C-4, hidden in three different vehicles which entered the Federal Reserve parking facility. Ebersole submitted a false \$11,000 bill to FEMA in connection with a September 2001 overnight trip to New York City by a DDADE subcontractor and two bomb dogs. DDADE was paid over \$700,000 for its services by the federal agencies.

Mr. McNulty said, "Not only did Mr. Ebersole steal from this country at its most vulnerable time, but, by supplying such ill-trained bomb dogs and handlers, he deliberately endangered the lives of many government workers, the public in general, and his own employees. Judge Brinkema's sentence appropriately reflects the seriousness of Ebersole's crimes."

The case was investigated by a task force of federal agents from the Inspector General Offices of the Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, and Department of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Thomas H. McQuillan and Robert C. Erickson.

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